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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE OFFICIALS PLEDGE TO CONTINUE PRESSURE
ON BURMA

REF: STATE 121789

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney; reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Senior officials at the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) underscored the intention of President Arroyo and Secretary Romulo to maintain pressure on the Burmese government to engage in legitimate dialogue with Burma's political opposition and ensure credible participation by the opposition, minorities and other stakeholders in the planned 2010 elections in Burma. The DFA officials agreed that sidelining the democratic opposition and others would cause the international community to view the election as a failure and delay the political reform process in Burma. Post will continue to engage closely with Philippine officials in the coming months. End summary.

12. (C) Per reftel request, the acting DCM spoke December 3 with Philippine DFA American Affairs Assistant Secretary Lourdes Yparraguirre and emphasized the importance of ASEAN member states, and the Philippines in particular, continuing to press the Burmese government to engage in direct dialogue with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, allow her to meet with top leaders of her National League for Democracy (NLD) party without restriction, and permit full participation in the upcoming 2010 national election by the opposition and other stakeholders, including minorities. Acting DCM noted that the issue of direct dialogue was a key element of the U.S.-ASEAN summit statement.

13. (C) A/S Yparraguirre warmly welcomed EAP A/S Campbell's recent discussions in Burma with top government officials, and lauded the U.S. decision to engage in senior-level dialogue with Burma. She stressed that the Philippine government fully shared USG views and goals on the appropriate way forward with Burma, and pledged that President Arroyo and Secretary Romulo would continue to press Burmese officials to move forward rapidly with dialogue with the Burmese opposition and carry out a fair and credible vote with wide participation in 2010. She also said that Manila would continue to encourage fellow ASEAN member states to take a more vocal and active stance on democratization in Burma, though the Philippines' outspoken stand on the issue had at times antagonized its ASEAN partners.

14. (C) Similarly, DFA Assistant Secretary for ASEAN Affairs Eduardo Maglaya agreed that sidelining the opposition and ethnic minorities would cause the 2010 elections to be a failure and would only serve to delay the political reform process in Burma. He welcomed the Embassy's briefing on A/S Campbell's and DAS Marciel's November visit to Burma, which he also praised as a positive step in U.S. engagement with Burma. Maglaya noted that officials from the Philippine Embassy in Rangoon had visited National League for Democracy headquarters, which was one of the actions discussed with DAS Marciel during his November visit to Manila. Maglaya said he looked forward to further discussions regarding Burma during DAS Marciel's planned Nov. 14-15 visit to Manila for a

U.S.-ASEAN senior officials meeting.
KENNEY